AERIAL VIDEO CAMERA SYSTEM

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This is a Continuation-In-Part of Patent Application No. 09/710,483 filed on November 9, 2000.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to stabilized aircraft video cameras which are attachable to aircraft and operated with a universal-control computer having photo vision on a video monitor proximate an aircraft-pilot seat from a computer-control camera having control vision that is directional in unison with direction of the aircraft video camera.

Aircraft cameras for surveillance, mapping, communicating and reporting surface features and conditions are well known. None, however, are known to have the gyroscopic, non-shaking stability, joystick camera direction with computer-monitor view, low weight, attachment convenience and low cost taught by this invention.

Examples of most-closely related but different prior art are described in the following patent documents.

U.S. Patent Number:	Inventor:	Issue Date:
6,604,038	Lesesky, *et al.*	08-05-2003
6,454,601	Monroe	04-08-2003
6,324,489	Millgard	11-27-2001
5,897,223	Tritchew et al.	04-27-1999
5,426,476	Fussell et al.	06-20-1995

This invention differs fundamentally from Lesesky et al.(U.S. Patent No. 6,604,038), Fussell et al.(U.S. Patent No. 5,426,476) and Monroe Patent No. 6,454,601). Neither separately or combinatorially have or teach either the computer-control system or the vibration damping taught by Applicant.

Tritchew et al., (U.S. Patent No.5,897,223), teaches a vibration-damping system, but it is an elaborate, expensive and heavy spring-enclosure device that differs basically from a spring-leg vibration-damping system taught by this invention.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Objects of patentable novelty and utility taught by this invention are to provide an aerial video camera system which:

has unobstructed camera pan and tilt view on a monitor that is conveniently visible by an aircraft pilot and/or passenger;

is operable with a universal-control computer in an aircraft;

has spring-leg attachment with giro prevention of camera shake;

is quickly and easily attached to a wing strut tie-down bolt hole;

has additional video signal available for recording and/or broadcasting; and

does not require aircraft-system electricity for aircraft certification.

This invention accomplishes these and other objectives with an aerial video camera having computerized control with view from a camera lens to an aircraft pilot and/or passenger through a computer monitor. Computerized control includes pushbutton operation and universal joystick directing of the camera with a universal-control computer that is articulated and positioned for convenient access by the pilot. The camera is spring-mounted with giro prevention of camera shake inside of a

camera pod. A camera lens has swivel pan-and-tilt viewing through a transparent hemispherical radome on a bottom of the camera pod.

The above and other objects, features and advantages of the present invention should become even more readily apparent to those skilled in the art upon a reading of the following detailed description in conjunction with the drawings wherein there is shown and described illustrative embodiments of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

This invention is described by appended claims in relation to description of a preferred embodiment with reference to the following drawings which are explained briefly as follows:

FIG. 1 is a partially cutaway side view of a camera on a pan-tilt head with giro shake prevention and spring mount in a radome and camera pod attached to a strut tie-down of a top-wing aircraft;

FIG. 2 is a partially cutaway front view of the top-wing aircraft having the camera pod attached to the strut bolt of the top-wing aircraft with the universal-control computer and monitor in relationship to a pilot position;

FIG. 3 is a bottom view of the radome showing spring vibration-damper springs and outlining giros and the camera in dashed lines;

FIG. 4 is a top view of the universal-control computer showing controls; and

FIG. 5 is a rear view of the universal-control computer showing a power switch and computer sockets.

DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Listed numerically below with reference to the drawings are terms used to describe features of this invention. These terms and numbers assigned to them designate the same features throughout this description and patent claims that follow.

1. Camera
2. Universal-control computer
3. Aircraft
4. Pan-tilt head
5. Base plate
6. Linear giro
7. Lateral giro
8. Resilient mount
9. Camera pod
10. Radome
11. Digital camera
12. Monitor
13. Attachment bracket
14. Wing-strut bolt
15. Lift wing
16. Wing strut
17. Counter-resilient fasteners
18. Top ends
19. Bottom ends
20. Joystick
21. Toggle switch
22. Power LED
23. Speed knob
24. Pushbuttons
25. Forward portion
26. Aft portion
27. Control lines.
28. Stabilizer fin
29. Bottom resilient member
30. Top resilient member
31. Spring legs
32. Stabilizer fin bracket

Referring to **FIGS. 1-5**, a camera **(1)** has electronic control by a universal-control computer **(2)** that is positioned predeterminedly in an aircraft **(3)**. The camera **(1)** is attached to a pan-tilt head **(4)** that is suspended rigidly from a base plate **(5)** in a camera pod **(9)**. A linear giro **(6)** and a lateral giro **(7)** are affixed to the base plate **(5)** for universal damping of vibration from the aircraft **(3)**. The vibration from the aircraft **(3)** is absorbed by a resilient mount **(8)** intermediate the base plate **(5)** and the camera pod **(9)** that is attached to the aircraft **(3)**.

A transparent radome **(10)** is extended downwardly from a bottom of the camera pod **(9)** for housing swivel panning and tilting view for the camera **(1)** and for camera control with the universal-control computer **(2)**.

There is electronic-control communication having control lines (27) intermediate the universal-control computer (2), the camera (1) and the pan-tilt head (4).

The camera (1) can include a digital camera (11) from which a field of view of optical signal is transmitted to and shown on a monitor (12) for the universal-control computer (2). The signal is also available for recording and/or broadcasting to a remote monitor which could even be located at a ground station.

The camera pod (9) has an attachment bracket (13) that is articulated for attaching the camera (1) to the aircraft (3) with a wing-strut bolt (14) proximate a junction of a bottom member of a lift wing (15) and a wing strut (16) of the aircraft (3).

The attachment bracket (13) can include articulation for supporting the camera (1) on a predetermined aircraft-camera support.

Swivel panning of the camera (1) on the pan-tilt head (4) is 270° horizontally rotational.

The camera pod (9) includes a predeterminedly aerodynamic surface having an arcuate-airfoil forward portion (25), a pointedly narrow aft portion (26) and the attachment bracket (13) extended upwardly from a top surface. Also included on the camera pod (9) is a stabilizer fin (28) with bracket (13) for attachment to the under surface of a wing. The attachment bracket (13) is sized and shaped to attach to the wing tie-down holes. A stabilizer fin bracket (32) provides increased support, longitudinal stability and improved aerodynamics for the device.

The resilient mount (8) can include counter-resilient fasteners (17) having counter-resilient support of the base plate (5) on the camera pod (9). The counter-resilient fasteners (17) have top ends (18) supported by a top of the camera pod (9)

and bottom ends **(19)** positioned in support of a bottom resilient member **(29)** under a bottom side of the base plate **(5)**. A top resilient member **(30)** is positioned intermediate the camera pod **(9)** and the base plate **(5)**.

Spring legs **(31)** with predetermined slanting orientation can be included for vibration damping intermediate the camera pod **(9)** and the base plate **(5)**.

The universal-control computer **(2)** includes joystick control of horizontally panning and vertically tilting of the camera **(1)** on the pan-tilt head **(4)** with a joystick **(20)**. The universal-control computer **(2)** can include toggle-switching of power on and off with a toggle switch **(21)** as indicated with a power LED **(22)**.

The universal-control computer **(2)** can include control of camera speed with a speed knob **(23)**.

The universal-control computer **(2)** can include control of a plurality of camera features of the camera **(1)** and the digital camera **(11)**with predetermined pushbuttons **(24)**. The plurality of camera features can include focus and zoom.

Without the linear giro **(6)** and the lateral giro **(7)**, the aerial video camera system can include the camera **(1)** having electronic control by the universal-control computer **(2)** and selected additional features described above.

A new and useful aerial video camera system having been described, all such foreseeable modifications, adaptations, substitutions of equivalents, mathematical possibilities of combinations of parts, pluralities of parts, applications and forms thereof as described by the following claims and not precluded by prior art are included in this invention.